

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Liners Direct

Chicago Manufacturing Center

Web Site Nets New Dealers For Liners Direct

Client Profile:

Liners Direct manufactures acrylic bathtub liners. Founded in 1997 and located in Itasca, Illinois, the company employs less than 20 people.

Situation:

In 2000, Liners Direct began exploring the idea of opening its business on the internet, and purchased the domain name "linersdirectinc.com" in anticipation of the day the company's site would go live. The site was to serve two purposes: to educate the public about the advantages of acrylic bathtub liners, and to attract new dealers. However, Liners Direct needed help developing the site and asked the Chicago Manufacturing Center (CMC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

CMC discussed every aspect of the proposed web site--technical, strategic, and operational issues--with Liners Direct during an initial three-hour strategy session. After deciding on high-level priorities for the site, CMC brought in partner organization WebPointCentral to carry out the technical logistics. CMC worked with both companies to manage the project, overseeing deadlines, deliverables, and budget. The site went live in February 2002. Though the company has not yet assigned quantified performance metrics to the site, it has noticeably increased customer awareness and has brought in an average of two new dealers per month.

The web site has been so popular with dealers that they asked Liners Direct to create an online form to send in orders. CMC mapped out the entire strategy, but Liners Direct staff manually enters the information until new accounting and production software is installed in late summer 2003. The online form has also been a boon for the customer service team; they make far fewer mistakes because the correct part number and price is preprinted on the online form.

Results:

- Increased customer awareness of acrylic liners.
- Generated an average of two new dealers per month.
- Increased sales.
- Improved distribution network relations.
- Improved customer service.

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Testimonial:

"I was impressed with the Chicago Manufacturing Center consultant's intelligence, clear vision, and good ideas. He was very intuitive."

Nancy Donegan, Marketing Services Manager